

**Speech by Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the launch
workshop of the African Monitor, Cape Town**

2 May 2006

We are honoured to welcome you to our shores and we hope that you are enjoying your stay in our country. For me personally, it is a singular privilege to exchange views with you as you prepare to launch the African Monitor.

As you know, there is global consensus that humanity needs to join hands in search of a better life for all. The world is at one that we can no longer countenance the duality of prosperity in one corner of the globe and poverty in another corner. Within and across nations, we know too well that poverty, disease and ignorance are not only inhuman; but they also breed insecurity for the rich and the poor alike.

It is on this account that the United Nations, taking up the cudgels of leadership expected of it, took the historic step of setting out the targets that all of us need to pursue in order truly to say that we have improved the human condition. And so, led by this august body, the world has moved beyond pious words and declarations of intent. In very concrete terms, the Millennium Development Goals define what each one of the nations of the world has to do in order to lay claim to the assertion that it is indeed a humane society.

Necessarily, attached to these Millennium Development Goals have to be key indicators of progress, the better to measure the progress we are making in concrete terms. Attached to the targets that we have set ourselves have to be concrete measures that the developing nations should take in order to meet their obligations to their citizens. Attached to the goals elaborated by the United Nations have to be performance indicators for the developed world, to measure the realisation of the commitments that they have made to assist the developing countries to attain the ideal of a better life for their peoples, the majority of whom are poor.

And so, Archbishop Ndungane, let me congratulate you and your colleagues for this initiative, to fashion a monitoring system for all these programmes, so word in actual practice turns into deed.

Africa in particular faces a long road ahead in trying to deal with the plethora of challenges thrown up by a legacy as much imposed by the history of colonialism as it was aggravated by the many years of neglect that our own weaknesses spawned.

When the United Nations identified 2015 as the year by which we should have significantly reduced hunger, child and maternal mortality, unemployment, ignorance and disease, it was expressing more than a hope about what could be done. It was inspired by the conviction that humanity had it within its power to meet these targets. If at the midpoint of that journey, some of us are anxious that Africa may not meet these objectives, this is not because we seek to counsel caution and even despondency. Rather, we wish to assert that the efforts can and must be intensified.

This is not the time to throw up our hands in despair. Rather, what makes the African Monitor initiative propitious is that it is going to help governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) alike to identify the constraints to faster

progress, and indeed to point the way forward in clearing the logjams. What we are looking for now, are processes that will assist us to accelerate the rate of implementation, so that within the next nine years we mobilise the peoples of the continent and the globe to meet the targets we have set.

Why we should evince such confidence, you may ask

The answer is to be found in the commitments that Africa has made in adopting the Constitutive Act of the African Union. It is to be found in the continent's resolve to eliminate conflict and its root causes. It is to be found in the new generation of leaders who have committed themselves to put in place an environment in which people-driven and people-centred programmes of development can be implemented. It is to be found in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which sets out concrete projects in infrastructure development, human resource preservation and development, harnessing of communications and other technology, and taking full advantage of comparative advantages that various regions of the continent possess.

Indeed, the answer is to be found in the unfolding process of Peer Review that NEPAD has put in place for each one of us to learn from one another from our mistakes and our successes in fashioning societies that care. South Africa is in the process of completing the first leg of its African Peer Review evaluation. As we speak, our Peer Review council is preparing for yet another consultative conference, which will take place on the fourth and fifth of this month in Soweto. In this process, we have ensured as a country that all stakeholders are involved in assessing development programmes. Many things that we took for granted are up for deliberation and interrogation. And we are confident that we will emerge from this process even better placed to harness the energies of our nation for the common good.

Africa, ladies and gentlemen, has asserted that it is not making a special plea for sympathy. Nor are we stretching out the hand of a beggar for handouts. We know that such an approach is not only humiliating; but also self-defeating. What we have said and continue to declare, are that opportunities exist on the continent for partnerships of mutual benefit to be built with the private and public sectors in the developed world.

Indeed, when the Group of Eight (G8) countries developed their Africa plan of action with our input; when the Commission on Africa set out the concrete things that needed to be done; when the developed countries individually adopted their own concrete initiatives to partner Africa in its own development efforts they all did this proceeding from the premise that a new era had dawned on the continent, and they will put in a special effort to help Africa succeed.

Because we are not so conceited as to believe that we can achieve our objectives all on our own, we do value the partnerships that have been and are being forged to meet the objectives of NEPAD and the United Nation Millennium Development Goals. And in as much as we need to measure the progress we are making within the continent, we also have to measure the practical expressions of the commitments the developed world has made to Africa.

This is what lends the African Monitor its special significance. On the one hand, it is an instrument that Africa and its partners can use to assess their joint efforts on the continent. On the other, it adds to the arsenal of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that African governments are putting in place to gauge their own progress. In this sense, you are adding what we hope will be an independent voice, bringing into play an additional arsenal of indicators, early warning mechanisms and evaluation procedures, the better to ensure that nothing is missed in the chain of input, output, outcome and impact.

We hope that as governments on the continent we will be justified in looking up to the African Monitor to be one of the voices that informs the debate on development implementation in Africa. We trust that such information will be based on sound research. In the same breath, we trust that the research findings will be used to encourage good practice and eliminate weaknesses.

It is particularly refreshing to see that the African Monitor intends to roll out a community monitoring programme that will enable communities to speak on development implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is in that intersection between “partnership” and “independence” that the true value of African Monitor will play itself out. And I dare say that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive.

Indeed, in some instances the pursuit of one extreme, in the name of “independence” can render a good intention irrelevant. That is if such independence is understood to mean distance from government, which is otherwise the primary agent of implementation. Everything is then done to demonstrate an arms-length relationship characterised by confrontation and attempts to prove the other party inept and always in the wrong.

On the other hand, if “partnership” means that African Monitor should become an instrument of governments on the continent or further field, it will inevitably flounder unable to add value to what governments are already doing, and susceptible to being used either by governments of the North or those in Africa as proxies in battles that have very little to do with development.

You will, I am confident, find the right balance, a balance that hopefully will be informed first and foremost by the aspirations and voices of the poor who, we are all agreed, should be the primary beneficiaries of our good intentions.

In executing this responsibility the African Monitor will need to be as thorough as it is fearless in pointing out issues such as unfair conditions that often accompany assistance from the developed countries. At times, governments in the developing world do not want to be seen to be looking the gift horse in the mouth; yet not raising sensitive issues may defeat the very purpose aid, debt forgiveness, trade and investment are meant to achieve.

On the other hand, the developed countries may feel constrained in bringing to light weaknesses they have identified and investors may not wish to jeopardise opportunities when faced with malpractices of all kinds. Yet if there were no one like African Monitor to raise these issues, the consequence will be that, in time, Africa will

revert to the same cycle of good intentions that flounder on the rocks of poor governance.

So in closing, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to call on you to roll up your sleeves and join in an endeavour which for us as Africans, cannot but succeed. You have a busy year ahead. And our high expectations of this, your courageous initiative, derives from our conviction that you are yet another brick in the edifice of Africa's renewal. Together, we have it in our power to make this, truly, an African Century.

Thank you.

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